

# **The Connecticut State Register and Manual:**

## **A Brief History**

By

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From the distance of over two hundred years it is difficult to know if the appearance of a “register” in Connecticut was greeted with much fanfare in 1785. But, a book entitled A Register for the State of Connecticut was first published in New London by Timothy Green in that year. Such register/almanacs were being introduced in many of the states of the then young republic and were widely used as important sources of information in a time before television, radio, and the wide distribution of newspapers. It was a time when the United States was taking its first steps as a fledgling nation. The treaty securing American independence had only been ratified in September of 1783, and it would be four more years before the Articles of Confederation would be succeeded by the United States Constitution. Green’s register, the first published in Connecticut, makes its humble beginning at this time as a paperbound volume, crudely printed on coarse paper, but filling a real need for the citizens of Connecticut. That register is also the direct ancestor of the book that has come to be known as the Connecticut State Register and Manual.

The T. Green who is identified as publisher on the title page of the 1785 edition of the register is Timothy Green, II, a member of the family discussed by William C. Kiessel in his article entitled “The Green Family a Dynasty of Printers,” published in “The New

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England Historical and Genealogical Register” in April 1950. Kiessel informs us that Timothy, II apprenticed with his uncle Timothy Green, Jr. in New London, while his brother Thomas established himself in the printing industry in New Haven. Thomas Green moved to Hartford in 1764 and there began printing the Connecticut Courant, which later became The Hartford Courant, the oldest newspaper in the United States. Timothy, II continued in the printing business until 1793 when his son Samuel assumed control. The business had been known as T. Green & Son since 1790, but the Register published in 1796, the year of Timothy, II’s death, declares itself “Printed and Sold by Samuel Green.”

The earliest editions of the register were small books, with pages 3 ½ by 5 inches and generally about 100 to 150 pages in length. It was sewn and covered with a heavier paper cover. Some of the covers were plain in light blue or buff, while others were quite decorative. Most were marbled papers, but none of these early registers had any printing on the covers. The covers would remain decorated, but blank, until at least 1827. The first portion of the books were structured along the lines of an almanac with a calendar, tables of rates of money, interest, and duties payable on imports. This section was quite lengthy considering the size of the volume (23 pages in the 1807 edition) and may be a reflection of how dependent our state was on the importation of both manufactured goods and raw materials in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The next and largest section of these early registers dealt with state government and institutions, listing state officers, assistants, members of the house of representatives, judges, clerks, justices of the peace, attorneys, courts of probate, notaries public, ministers, colleges, incorporated cities, banks, surveyors, and militia. The final section was reserved for the government of the

United States and the various states and also contained certain miscellaneous information regarding roads, post offices and the distances between cities. Some form of almanac survived until 1941. In 1942 it was replaced by a simple biennial or annual calendar which continued to be a feature of the book until 1954, when it was replaced by a list of official holidays, which survives in the current edition. Considering the more than two hundred year history of the publication and the significant changes in size and appearance, the basic functional similarity between the early editions and today's book is quite interesting and surprising.

Samuel Green was to be associated with the register for 58 years, by his own count. The Secretary of the State's involvement with the register began quite early in its history. The 1815 edition of the book indicates on the title page that it was "compiled under the inspection of the Secretary of the State of Connecticut." Exactly what this inspection involved cannot be known with certainty from the existing evidence, but it would seem logical that many of the statistics and information contained in the book relating to government were provided by, or obtained from the secretary's office. In fact, in several of the prefaces and editor's notes that appear in the books over the years, the secretary's office is cited as a source of information. The secretary's inspection privileges regarding the register continued until 1821. Beginning in 1823, Samuel Green credits himself as the compiler of the book.

Green's Register, as it was known for many years, appears to have been a popular publication. In fact many of the editions now in the collection of the History and Genealogy Unit of the Connecticut State Library, beginning as early as 1812, are rebound

with the names of state agencies stamped on their covers, clearly indicating early and continuing use of the registers by state government.

In the preface to the 1823 Register, Green comments that “The postage in many instances, necessarily arising from the publication of the Register, is very great, and bears heavily upon the profits, which are extremely small, compared with Registers published in other States.” While we know that registers were available in many other states, similar volumes were also prepared by other publishers in Connecticut and provided competition for Green. The Connecticut State Library collection contains a Connecticut Pocket Almanac published by E. & J. Babcock dating from 1800 and many others are listed in Albert C. Bates article “Connecticut Almanacs of the Last Century.” In 1827 Norton and Russell’s Register, published in Hartford made its first appearance. It was slightly more polished in appearance and carried advertising. Once again we see an association with the office of the Secretary. The preface states that “That part of the work contained the State Officers, has been carefully compared with the records in the Secretary’s office.” At the same time Green changes the publication format of his register from the calendar year to one “embracing the political year” 1827-1828. This is the only instance of Green making any alteration to the issue date/sequence of the book while he remained publisher. In 1829, the third edition of this new register appears “printed and published by John Russell.” The next (1830) edition of the register appears under the title Huntington’s State Register. Although the title has changed, it is truly only a nominal difference. Huntington’s is clearly a continuation of Norton and Russell’s register. Huntington’s Register survives only one more year as an independent

publication and in 1832 is merged with Green's book. In that edition Green and the Huntingtons address a notice "TO THE PUBLIC."

An Annual Register, embracing all the information necessary, relating to this State, and generally to the United States, has always been deemed useful to every profession, and class of men. It should be as extensive in its contents, as the nature of the subject and the price of the work will admit – so that every family may be furnished with this condensed and convenient Record. For many years, GREEN'S REGISTER was the only one printed in this State, and one of the first printed in the Union; but within a few years past, another has been issued at Hartford, and it has been thought by the Editors of both, that by uniting them and applying their joint labors to compile one only; the work might be made more accurate, and its contents more extensive. They have, therefore, united in this the ONLY REGISTER published in this state, and they trust, from the amount of information it contains, and the low price at which it is afforded, it will meet with increased approbation and patronage.

For the years 1832 to 1840, the merged register was published by Green in partnership with other publishers from Hartford and New Haven. In addition to the Huntingtons, the names of Canfield & Robins and Durrie and Peck appear on the title pages of these editions as publishers. In 1841 all names other than Samuel Green have disappeared and the title of the Register is changed to Green's Connecticut Annual Register and United States Calendar. The 1841 Edition also lists the location of Green's publishing company as East Windsor, but in 1843 the business is located in Hartford.

Another register made its appearance in 1847. The cover of this first issue is stamped Bradley's Connecticut Register, but the title page reads The Connecticut Register: Being an Official State Calendar of Public Officers and Institutions in Connecticut.

Originally published by the company of Brown and Parsons of Hartford, the 1847 edition identifies Charles W. Bradley, Jr., “Clerk in the office of the Secretary of State” as the author. This new register is much more a “book” than Green’s. The construction is sewn signatures bound in black linen over boards with the words “Bradley’s Connecticut Register” and a rendering of the Connecticut Armorial Bearings stamped in gold on the cover. The front and back covers are also blind stamped with a decorative boarder design. The volume as a whole provides a marked contrast to the plainer register published by Green. Unlike Green’s modest book, the publishers of this book tell us in the preface of the 1852 edition that they wish the book to be accurate, but also “an ornamental appendage to the center-table.” Another interesting feature on the title page is the printing of the 80<sup>th</sup> Psalm below a representation of the state arms. This psalm is often cited as the source for state motto “Qui Transtulit Sustinent”. The involvement of Mr. Bradley combined with the appearance of the armorial bearings and the 80<sup>th</sup> Psalm suggest an official link with the office of the secretary and state government.

Green also produced an 1847 edition of his register and in the back of that volume appears a note headed “To the Public” from the publisher. The note appears to be both a statement of purpose and a promotional effort by the publisher, but he is clearly aware of his new competition. He describes the book in modest terms. “The design of the work is to supply the public with a book of daily reference solely, at a cheap price, in a style respectable and in keeping with the object; and not for advertising or display of mechanical ingenuity.” He also states that “It is hoped that the officers (military officers) will feel it their duty to purchase a copy” of the register. He then makes the

following statement. “I have reason to believe that it is as correct as the Register published by the Secretary of the State.” We do not know the exact nature of the relationship between the publisher Brown and Parsons and the Secretary’s office, but the general tone of Green’s note suggests that he is sensitive to the threat to the prominence of his publication. He closes his note “I do not feel willing to be driven from a post I have occupied, by favor of the public, for fifty-seven years, nor prepared at this time to bid adieu to my friends, but shall endeavor to wait submissively for coming events.”

Bradley’s Connecticut Register appeared again in 1848, but the title page contains no attribution of authorship, which suggests the possibility of a hesitancy on the part of the Secretary’s office, or the publisher to imply a partnership or make any overt statement of support or sanction for the book. The 1848 edition of Green’s register displays the State Seal on its cover, which invites speculation that the seal was reproduced here as a reaction to Mr. Bradley’s connection with the Brown and Parsons register and may have been an effort on Green’s part to assert or imply some “official” status for his publication.

The coming events for which Green was waiting, submissively or otherwise, determined that in 1849 his register would be combined with Bradley’s Register and the firm of Brown and Parsons would become the publisher. Bradley’s name disappears from the book and the preface of the 1849 edition tells us the story:

Mr. Samuel Green, who, for 58 years, has made his annual New Year’s visits to numerous friends and patrons, having made an arrangement for a union of Green and Bradley’s Registers, relinquishes the active duties of editor, though he retains a pecuniary interest in the sale of the Connecticut Register.

The assumption of responsibility for the publication of the register by the firm of Brown and Parsons ends the association of the Green family with this volume, an association that began with the first volume published in 1785, a total of 64 years. Brown and Parsons and successor firms F.A. Brown and Brown and Gross continued to publish the register with very little alteration to the format until 1887.

The firm of Packard & Brown began business as booksellers and publishers in 1835. In 1838 the company's name was changed to Brown & Parsons. It operated under that name until 1852 when it became simply F.A. Brown. Brown & Gross succeeded that firm in 1858 and continued in operation until 1891, when it became Belknap & Warfield. Later known as G. F. Warfield & Co. and Witkower's, it is currently still in operation as Huntington's Book Stores, Inc. of Hartford.<sup>1</sup>

Beginning in 1881, two editions of the register were published. One, entitled *The Connecticut Register: A State Calendar of Public Officers and Institutions for 1881*, bound in black, 206 pages in length, and containing advertisements. The other, entitled *The Connecticut Register and Manual: A State Calendar of Public Officers and Institutions in 1881*, bound in red, 286 pages in length, and containing no advertisements. This is the first appearance of a "register and manual." Both books are compiled by Charles F. Brown and published by Brown and Gross, but, in addition to the contents of the register, the register and manual also contains the "Manual and Roll of the General Assembly of Connecticut, with Rules and Orders – 1881". This new variation of the register was clearly intended for the use of legislators and probably other

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<sup>1</sup> Huntington's Book Stores, Inc. was still in operation when this history of the *Connecticut State Register and Manual* was written in 1989, but dissolved in 1995.

state officials. Two editions continued to be published until 1887 when that task was assigned to the Secretary of the State by House Bill No. 338 entitled “An Act concerning the Publication of Official and other Statistics of the State,” approved April 14, 1886.